

Newsletter

Colorado River Management Plan

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park
Grand Canyon, Arizona



June 2003

To the many people interested in Grand Canyon:

The National Park Service is pleased to provide you a status report on the progress made to revise the 1989 Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP). Under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Park Service (NPS) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as an essential part of this revision. The NPS, through the EIS, will strive to:

1. Provide a comprehensive analysis of the impacts to our natural and cultural resources from current visitor usage on the Colorado River; and
2. Evaluate various alternatives that protect this important resource, while providing a quality visitor experience.

Our objectives for the public process are to be open and thorough, to hear and understand the needs and concerns of river users and other constituents, and to afford the public every opportunity to provide input. I am pleased that the process has gone well and that the public has been so engaged.

The park received 13,770 submissions containing a total of 55,165 individual comments as part of the public scoping effort. Analysis of these comments required the concerted effort of park staff and contractors.

We offered a variety of public outreach methods to inform the public about the process to revise the CRMP. It is rewarding to have received such good participation. In this newsletter, you will read about our public scoping meetings, an expert panel series and stakeholder workshops. In addition you will obtain information about the continuing planning process.

Your input throughout this process is very important to us and we encourage you to take advantage of the various opportunities to participate and provide your thoughts as we work our way through the EIS process over the next year and a half. If you have not already done so, please help us keep you informed by submitting your e-mail address to grca_crmp@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

Joseph F. Alston
Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park



sound • ing n.

an environmental probe

*an act of measuring the depth of a
body of water*

*[often pl.] an exploratory sampling, as
of public opinions.*

Contents:

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sounding sources

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CRMP ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS

The purpose of this EIS is to revise management guidelines for visitor use on the Colorado River corridor within Grand Canyon National Park. Background information about the 1989 CRMP can be found on the Internet at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/.

During this revision process, the NPS will develop and evaluate alternatives to address resource protection issues, potential resource impacts, user capacities, and mitigation measures necessary or desirable to achieve the park purpose: "As a place of national and global importance, Grand Canyon National Park is to be managed to:

- Preserve and protect Grand Canyon National Park's natural and cultural resources and eco-

logical processes, as well as its scenic, aesthetic, and scientific values; and

- Provide opportunities for visitors to experience and understand the environmental interrelationships, resources, and values of the Grand Canyon without impairing the resources." (General Management Plan, Grand Canyon National Park, 1995, pg.1)

The NPS will review key resource issues that affect the integrity of Grand Canyon and will consider alternatives that include no-action (the status quo), no motorized use, and varying levels of motorized and non-motorized watercraft use.

Issues to be addressed in the EIS will include, but are not limited to:

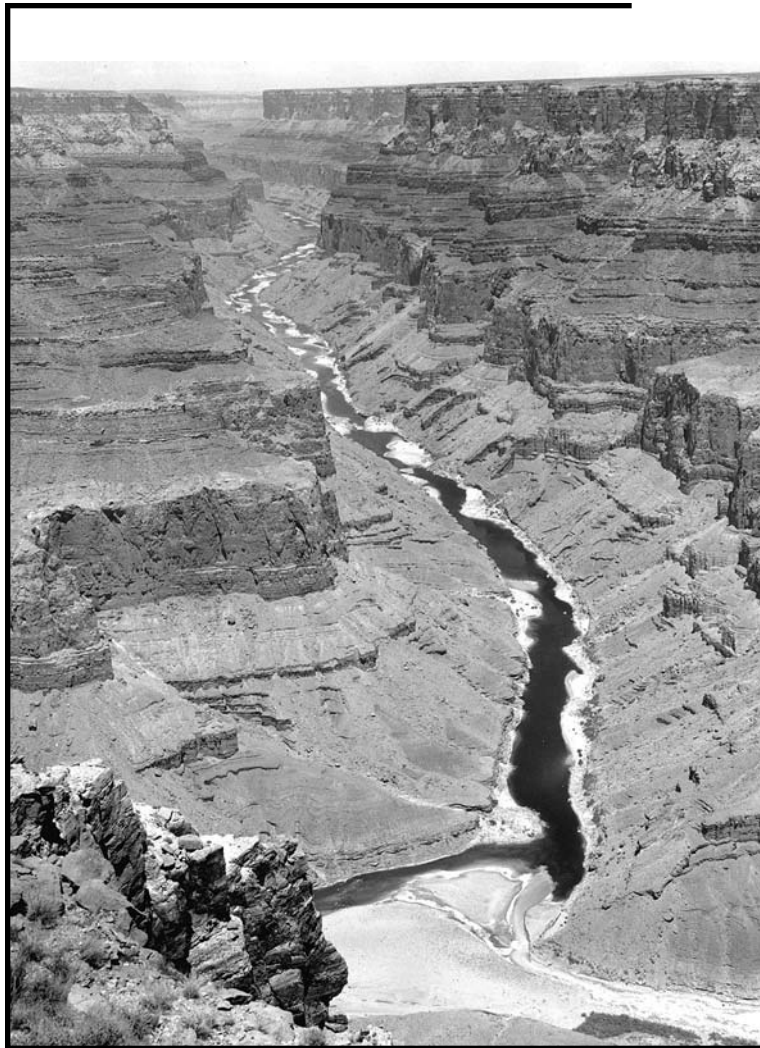
- Appropriate levels of visitor use consistent with natural and cultural resource protection and preservation mandates;
- Allocation of use between commercial and non-commercial groups;
- Non-commercial permitting system;
- Level of motorized versus non-motorized watercraft use;
- The range of services and opportunities provided to the public; and
- In consultation with the Hualapai Indian Tribe and other appropriate parties, the continued use of helicopters to transport river passengers from the Colorado River near Whitmore Wash.

The EIS process focuses on visitor use issues and the associated impacts to natural and cultural resources. Glen Canyon Dam operations, commercial overflights, Wild and Scenic River designation, official Wilderness designation, backcountry operations, and allocation of administrative use are outside the scope of the CRMP EIS.



COLORADO RIVER BEACH BELOW KAIBAB BRIDGE, 1930,
NPS PHOTO

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES



The public scoping process began in June 2002 when interested stakeholders were asked for their input on future resource conditions, trip qualities and issues of concern. Feedback was collected through written comment, electronic outreach and public meetings. All public comments gathered from the 1997 public scoping period will also be considered in the EIS.

As part of the scoping process in 2002, the NPS hosted a series of public meetings in Flagstaff, Arizona; Peach Springs, Arizona; Phoenix, Arizona; Salt Lake City, Utah; Las Vegas, Nevada; Denver, Colorado; Baltimore, Maryland; and Oakland, California. More than 1,000 people attended these meetings combined. A synopsis entitled, "Public Scoping Issue Analysis Summary – Grand Canyon National Park" can be found on the Internet at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/.

VIEW OF THE CONFLUENCE OF THE COLORADO AND THE
LITTLE COLORADO RIVERS FROM CAPE SOLITUDE, 1963

PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE EIS SCOPING PROCESS IS OVERWHELMING

Public response to the scoping process was tremendous. A total of 13,770 responses (containing 55,165 individual comments) were submitted during the summer and fall of 2002.

The CRMP Planning Team and its environmental consultants, SWCA, read every submission and created a master database. Comments were reviewed and categorized to summarize observations, opinions, concerns, and recommendations.

It is interesting to note that almost every type of comment received in 1997 (see *Summary of Public Comment from the 1997 Colorado River Management Plan Scoping Process*, April 1998 on the Web

site) was reiterated in 2002, plus several more. The issues most commonly raised are also consistent with those raised in 1997. A summary document was prepared and a list of major issues was developed. These two documents can be found on the CRMP Web site: www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/.

The CRMP planning team is analyzing these comments in greater detail and will complete the environmental studies that will lead to the development of alternatives. Given the number of comments received in 2002 and the complexities of the issues, this will be a challenging undertaking.

EXPERT PANEL SERIES CONDUCTED

In late January 2003, The Mary Orton Company, LLC, under contract with Grand Canyon National Park, conducted expert panels in Phoenix to share and clarify the latest research and other pertinent information on issues that will be addressed in the CRMP. Topics for the two panels included: 1) carrying capacity (i.e., physical, social, and ecological), group size, and seasonality; and 2) allocation of recreational use among user groups. The panels were connected through an interactive video setup to allow people in Flagstaff to watch the entire proceedings. Information obtained from the expert panel series will be used to help the CRMP planning team develop alternatives and assess impacts.

During the session on carrying capacity, group size, and seasonality the experts delved into the possible range of specific indicators that should

be considered in the EIS and discussed which were the most important or useful. (Indicators are resource conditions that can be quantitatively assessed to determine whether experiential quality or resource health is being protected.) They also identified the possible range of standards for those indicators. (Standards are the quantitative level that defines how much impact or change is acceptable for a particular condition.)

Panelists were asked to identify possible management actions (particularly those related to use level, group size, and seasonality) that would produce different impact levels and recreational opportunities, as well as what specific actions or sets of actions might impact use limits. A second expert panel series focused on allocation of recreational use among user groups.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

The Mary Orton Company, LLC also coordinated a set of stakeholder workshops. These workshops provided an opportunity for stakeholders to communicate their values and preferences to the CRMP planning team on two important topics: the private river trip permit distribution system and the appropriate spectrum of visitor services. Representatives from ten stakeholder groups were invited to participate:

- Private boaters
- Educators
- Outfitters
- Commercial customers
- Wilderness coalition
- Native American tribes
- Ecological concerns
- Commercial river guides
- Researchers
- People with disabilities

The moderators used an interactive polling technology to collect information from the participants. Seven of the ten groups agreed that the following attributes ranged from important to very important: natural quiet, opportunity for side trips, knowledge of the resource (ecological, geological, cultural, etc.), length of trip, opportunity to experience nature on its own terms, condition of the resource, and stewardship. A full report entitled, *Colorado River Management Plan Stakeholder Workshops* can be found on the Internet at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/.



NEXT STEPS FOR THE EIS PROCESS

Given the complexity of this plan and the extensive level of public comment, the NPS is shifting the next phase of public outreach from the summer to the fall of 2003. This will provide the CRMP planning team and environmental consultants adequate time to thoroughly review public input and proceed with the development and analysis of alternatives, which is the next step in the EIS process.

According to Rick Ernenwein, CRMP planning team leader,

“A great deal of work has already been accomplished by the public, the CRMP planning team, and our environmental consultant,

SWCA, but there is still much more in-depth analysis that must be done. We are working very hard to produce the best possible products and to complete the EIS by December 2004.”

There will be another set of stakeholder workshops in June 2003. These meetings are still in development, and details will be posted on the website at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/ as soon as they are finalized. Meetings to review the draft EIS will be held in late fall of 2003.

The CRMP timeline for the EIS process is available online at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/. It outlines the complete EIS process and additional steps that will be undertaken.



SECOND POWELL EXPEDITION DEPARTING
FROM GREEN RIVER, WY, 1871

CRMP/EIS PLANNING TEAM

The preparation of the EIS is a multi-year effort that must be well-planned, well-researched, and well-executed in order to be successful. The NPS has put together a comprehensive planning team to accomplish this task.

Leading the CRMP planning team is Rick Ernenwein, the lead resource planner at Grand Canyon National Park. Rick and the rest of the planning team will ensure that all the planning objectives are met and a quality plan is produced by December 31, 2004. Planning objectives include: a thorough public involvement effort that involves all interested stakeholders, compliance with all federal, state, and regional requirements, a well maintained administrative record, and a comprehensive analysis of the alternatives.

The NPS also contracted with professional organizations to assist the NPS planning team throughout the process. SWCA Environmental Consultants was selected to prepare the EIS. SWCA will help the NPS research cultural, environmental and natural resource impacts as well as develop and evaluate alternatives. While SWCA will prepare the EIS, the NPS remains the final decision-maker and will supervise and be actively involved in all aspects of the CRMP EIS process.

The Mary Orton Company, LLC and BJ Communications, Inc. were also hired to work with stakeholders and NPS to design and implement procedures for meaningful public involvement throughout the process.

How TO STAY INFORMED:

1

For the latest information on the CRMP, visit:

www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/

or sign up to receive updates electronically by submitting your e-mail address to:

grca_crmp@nps.gov.

2

You can also contact the CRMP planning team via mail:

CRMP Planning Team
c/o Rick Ernenwein
Grand Canyon National Park
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

All specific questions should be directed to Rick Ernenwein, lead resource planner, at 928-779-6279.

**OUR GOAL IS TO POST INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS ON OUR WEBSITE, www.nps.gov/grca/crmp/
AND SEND NOTICE VIA E-MAIL WHEN NEW INFORMATION IS POSTED.**

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